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A Chronicle
...of
Ancient
Chestnut Street

Springfield, Mass.



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A Chronicle
...of
Ancient
Chestnut Street

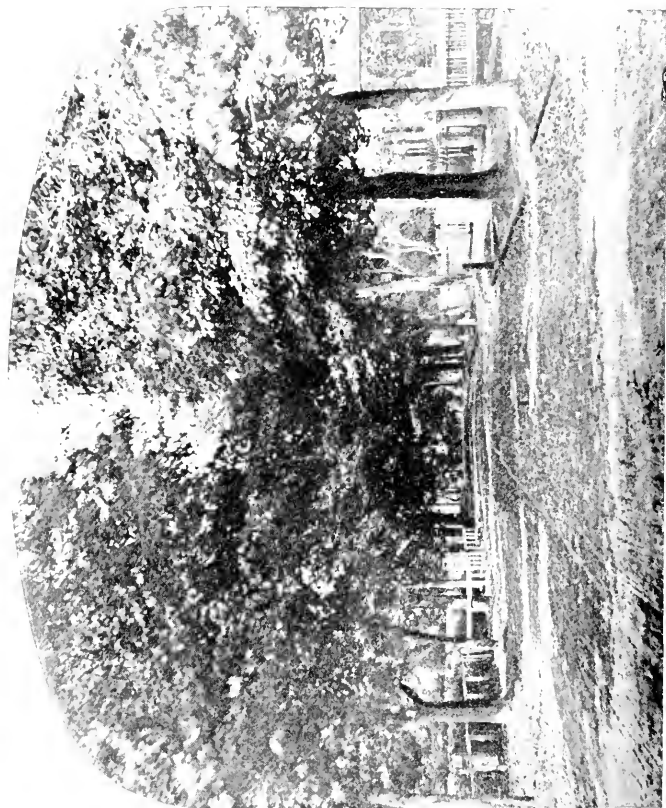


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WHITTIER'S SNOW BOUND.

“ And dear and early friends—the few
Who yet remain—shall pause to view
These Flemish pictures of old days ;
Sit with me at the homestead hearth,
And stretch the hands of memory forth
To warm them at the wood fire's blaze !
And thanks untraced to lips unknown,
Shall greet me like the odors blown
From unseen meadows newly mown.”



ANCIENT CHESTNUT STREET.

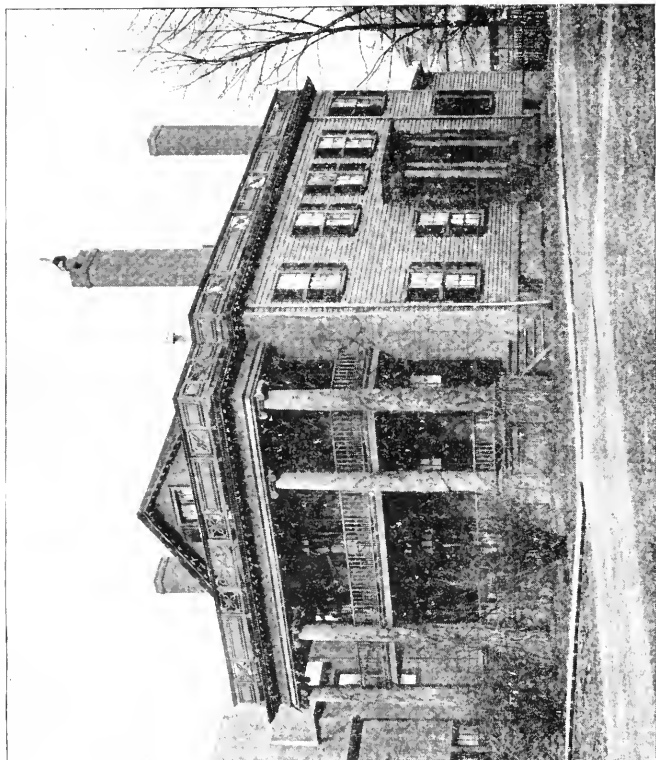
A Chronicle of Ancient Chestnut Street.



A SHORT time before Judge Shurtleff's death, he asked me to write the History of Chestnut Street, for the "Historical Society." I replied it was impossible. I was afterwards asked to write for "The Women's Club" concerning "The Romance of Our Streets." Again I refused; though I could trace back to the first settlers of Springfield, nine ancestors who were living on what is now called Main street, in 1640-50, their spirits whispered to me no romance. I think there must have been some subtle influence from the dead past, for little by little tradition and memory took possession of me, and before I realized it there was the History of Ancient Chestnut before my eyes. I had simply to write it;

and now my children plead it shall be written for them. House Number Five, please remember, *is* written for its grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

It might be called The Story of Eight Houses, for Chestnut street only contained eight in its early days. It ended at Bridge street, where cows were pastured on the grass land, burdock bushes lined the street, we children gathered the burrs to make baskets. Where the Chapin and club houses are, was Worthington Grove extending to Spring street; a fine place for picnics. The Fourth of July before Harrison's and Tyler's election, the Hon. Edward Everett gave a political address in that grove. There was no Pearl street nor Mattoon, nor Harrison avenue; when those changes came they were considered sad innovations. The lots on Chestnut street were restricted, though both sides belonged to the homestead, only one, the right hand side from State street, could be built upon.



HOUSE NUMBER ONE

A hedge of various kinds fenced off the unused land opposite, which being mostly a steep hill, was made into offsets, or grew a grove of native trees.

The romance of each house is history as I read tradition and my own memories. Mr. George Bliss occupied House Number One on the brow of the hill where the Episcopal Church now stands. Mr. Jonathan Dwight, 2d, a graduate of Harvard College, built the house for his daughter Mary, the wife of Mr. Bliss, it was said then to be the finest house in town. Mr. Dwight originally owned the land and laid out the street. From Bliss' Hill over the terrace to the hill by House Number Six, (called "Child's Hill" for many years), the soil was pure sand. Forest trees thrived and blackberry vines reveled. Labor, money and patience changed it into a garden of Eden. Mr. Bliss' father and himself were graduates of Yale College. Mr. Bliss, senior, was a noted lawyer in his day. Mr.

Bliss, Jr., was also a lawyer. He was one of the most public spirited of Springfield's sons, always seeking to give instead of being sought. His name generally headed a paper, richer men simply following his lead. He was president of two western railroads, the first president of the Chicopee Bank. He it was who gave impetus to the library, paying \$10,000 for the land and adding to the gift \$10,000 in money. The hill was always known by the name of Bliss' Hill. Let me here tell a story of later date. When it was considered desirable to keep that hill free from buildings, men were called upon to subscribe money in the interest of church and library. The son, Mr. George Bliss of New York, gave in \$1,000 on the price of the land, with the understanding it should be called "Bliss Park." Mr. Merrick dying about that time, leaving a large sum of money to Springfield's institutions, a handsome legacy to the library, all memory of Mr. Bliss

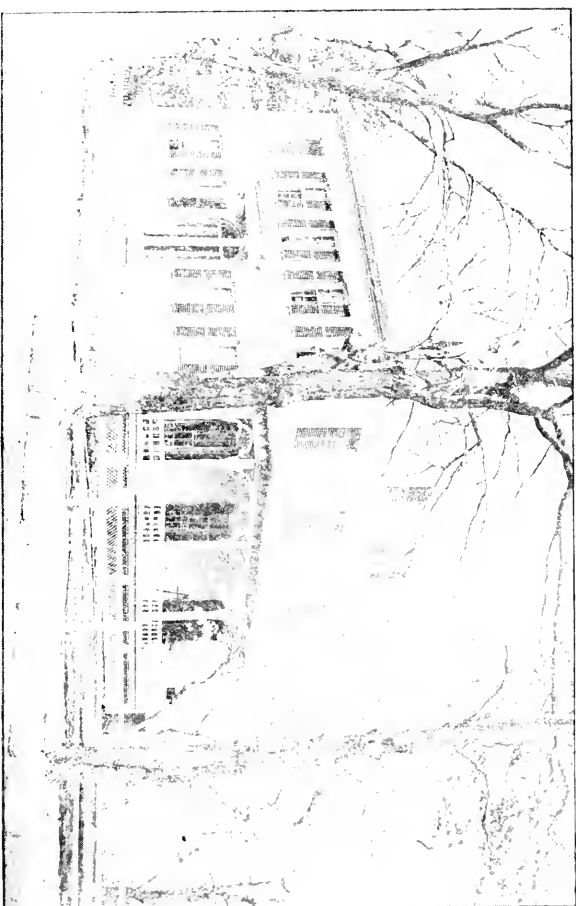
vanished and "Merrick Park" was the result. Mr. Merrick would have regretted the act more than any one. The city lost a memorial that had been ordered in Italy at a cost of \$10,000, and the interest of one of its sons. Mr. Bliss told these facts last autumn and gave liberty to repeat them. They show how quickly past virtues are forgotten. Mrs. Bliss was a woman of strong mental qualities, a type of the old aristocratic kind. Social lines were marked, and no one heeded them more than she. Her patriotism was the cure. When the Civil war came all barriers were removed, and nobody but McClellan was outside her pale; his inactivity roused her indignation. Her interest in the soldiers knew no limit. After the news of a battle her house was the gathering place for cutting out work for the sanitary commission. No matter the day, if the tidings came Sunday morning the afternoon was given up to that work, that it might be sent to

the front as soon as possible. Number One was without and within attractive. A fine hedge on the left hand side, marking off the land there, and within, on the other side, were a wealth of flowers, flowering shrubs and fruit trees during the summer that a picket fence protected. A conservatory in the winter months, into which the two windows of the front parlor opened, was a continued pleasure. Camellias, azaleas, geraniums bloomed as in a greenhouse, and the fragrance of heliotrope, jasmine and daphne made up for their lack of perfume. Between the two parlor windows opposite the door as you entered, was that wonderful painting of the Holy Family, an original by Annibale Carracci. The head of Joseph was like life. It was bought in Florence in troublous times; afterwards a law was passed forbidding such pictures to be taken out of Italy. The memorial window for Mr. and Mrs. Bliss in the Church of the Unity is a copy of that painting

which is now in the possession of Mr. George Bliss of New York. There were three children born in Number One, the eldest, Mary, died in infancy, the second daughter, Sarah, married Mr. George Walker. The only son, George, is a well known lawyer in New York. I cannot leave Bliss' Hill without a memory of those days, when with our sleds on our way to school at the seminary on Maple street, where Mr. F. H. Harris now lives, we "slid" down the ice-covered hill (coasting was a later term) turning the corner at State street with an impetus that carried us half way to Main. No danger signals were required; then on to Maple, if time allowed, just one slide down Cross street hill, then called "Pig Alley." Have you ever looked over the brow of that hill? Going into chaos one might say. Just grip your sled, close your eyes, and you and your sled one, pass over the knolls with a bound, each successive one with increasing

force, pride, not pleasure, rewarding you at the finish. How our cheeks glowed when we entered school!

House Number Two was built and occupied by Mr. James Brewer, a descendant of Rev. Daniel Brewer of England, pastor in 1694 of the first Congregational Church in Springfield. Mr. Brewer was a merchant; he married Miss Harriet Adams of Mansfield, Conn. There were eight children born in Number Two, four sons and four daughters. Harriet, a beautiful girl, married Mr. Spaulding Porter of Hartford, Conn., dying soon after. The oldest son, James, married Mr. Porter's sister Sarah, a woman whose character was pure gold. Mr. E. S. Brewer of Springfield is their only son; Mrs. Dr. Corcoran of Maple street, the only daughter. Eunice, the fourth daughter, married Dr. David P. Smith, the noted physician and surgeon, who had inherited these gifts from a line of distinguished ancestors. Dr. Smith



HOUSE NUMBER TWO.

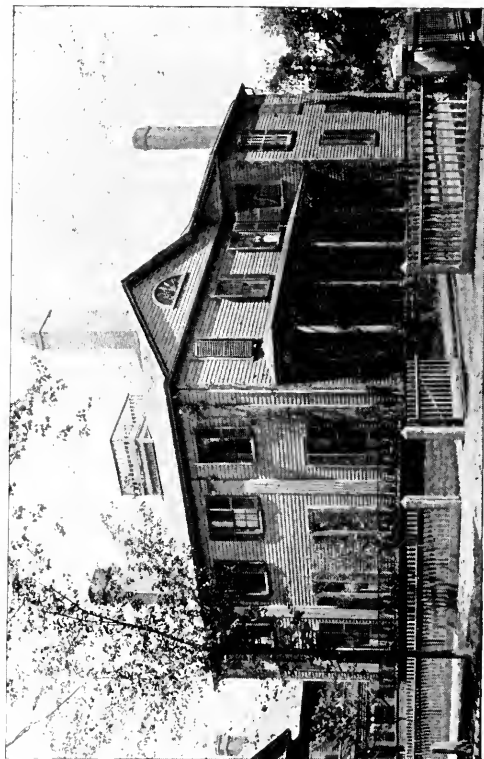


HOUSE NUMBER THREE.

held two professorships in Yale College at the time of his death, 1880. Miss Mary Brewer and Dr. and Mrs. Smith occupied House Number Two for some years, later it was rented. It is still in the possession of Mrs. E. Brewer Smith.

House Number Three was built by Mr. Jonathan Dwight, 2d, for his daughter Sarah, the first wife of the historian George Bancroft. She died a few months after occupying the house. Memory brings Mr. Bancroft to mind as he came out of the door to join a democratic procession, which he left at the foot of the hill, and child though I was, I did not wonder he left it, for it was a very rough looking set of men compared to the whig processions my father favored. My sister Sophia and myself learned to play "vingt et un" with the Bancroft children; we have not forgotten the lovely candy we had for pool. Mr. Bancroft did not live in Number Three long; Mr. Jonathan Dwight, 3d, bought it

and lived there many years. He married Miss Ann Bartlett of Boston, where he had been in active business a few years. He returned to Springfield in 1830, living a life of leisure afterwards. Mrs. Dwight was tall, commanding and gracious, so kindly to the young people, they were very fond of her. The only daughter, Anna, was much admired wherever she went—at Saratoga, Newport, or Washington; she was called "the Rose Bud of Boston." She married Captain Charles Baker, a graduate of West Point; his father was Colonel Baker of the army. Both families had money, and Captain Baker soon retired from active service. The only son, Mr. John Dwight, lives in New York, a successful civil engineer. When Mr. Dwight left Springfield, House Number Three was occupied by Mr. George Atwater and family. It was then bought by Mr. George Bliss for his daughter, Mrs. George Walker. Mr. Walker was from New Hampshire, a



HOUSE NUMBER FOUR

graduate of Dartmouth College. He practiced law in Springfield and was the first president of the Third National Bank. There are many to-day who remember his supremely courteous manners, never failing patience, which virtues must have added much to his popularity during the seven years he was consul general at Paris. Mrs. Walker was lovely as a girl, a large-hearted woman, full of interest in all the philanthropies of that time. The Home of the Friendless and the Children's Home have not forgotten her. House Number Three has been owned for several years by Hon. W. H. Haile. Massachusetts honors her adopted son.

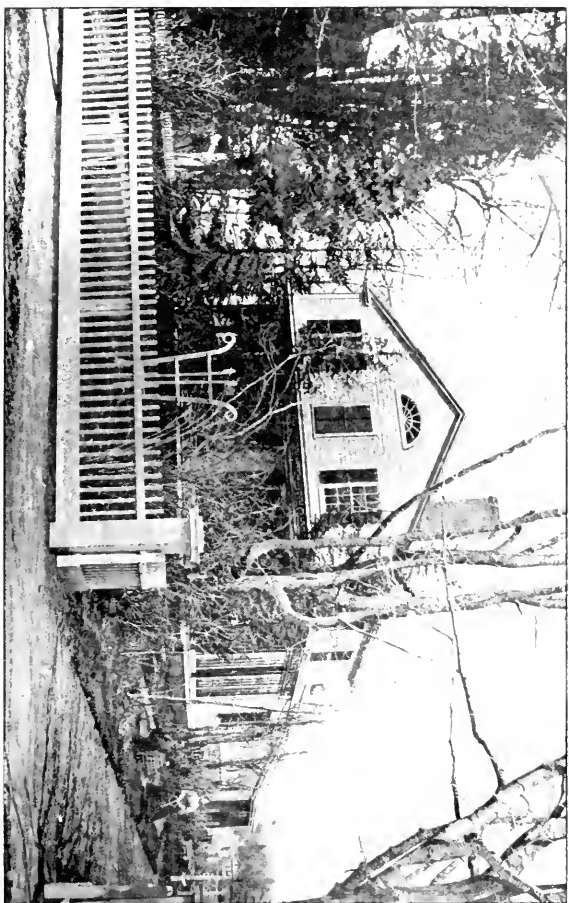
House Number Four was originally built by Mr. Joseph Hall, agent for a manufacturing company in Boston and Springfield. Tradition and memory fail to reveal clearly its early history. It was built about 1824. Mr. Hall's wife was Maria Bartlett of Boston, sister to Mrs. Jonathan Dwight.

There were four children, three daughters and one son. Two children must have been born in Number Four. The second daughter, Caroline, married the late Prof. H. L. Eustis of Harvard College. The family moved to Boston in 1827. The next owner was Mr. Henry Dwight; his wife was Lucy Ann Bradford of Boston. Tradition and memory reveal very little of them. Mr. Edmund Dwight is also named on the transfer list. Tradition is silent. Mr. Jonathan Dwight, 3d, needs only memory to tell his part in the story. He was the next owner. He lived in Boston winters for awhile, returning by stage coach in the early spring. When he bought the Bancroft house, Number Three, Judge David Cummins of Salem bought House Number Four. Judge Cummins was called to Springfield as Judge of the Court of Common Pleas. His family was a fine addition to the social life of Chestnut street. There were seven children, four daughters and

three sons. Judge Cummins was one of the last to wear the ruffled shirt which gave a refined air and seemed to mark the gentleman. The dictionary meaning of that word was not then obsolete. Frank, the eldest son, opened a law office in Springfield. The second daughter, Helen, married a wealthy paper manufacturer, Hon. Edmund P. Tileston, whose home was in Dorchester. She was married in Number Four. The third daughter, Maria, a sparkling, bright girl became famous in after years as an authoress: the "Lamplighter" was translated into several languages. Judge Cummins moved to Dorchester in 1845 or 1846, and opened a law office in Boston. Number Four was next owned by Mr. Horace Draper of the firm Draper & Bailey. The only daughter, Caroline, married Dr. Edward Trask, one of the family who built the Alexander house on State street. The late Mr. George Merriam in 1848 bought House Number Four, and it is

still occupied by the family. The Webster Dictionary has made the name of Merriam famous. No need for memory yet to revive the virtues of Mr. George Merriam. He died in 1880. Mrs. Merriam died in 1875. She was a woman of rare loveliness in person and character.

House Number Five was built by Mr. Elisha Edwards in 1824 and was occupied by the family over fifty years. Mr. Edwards was born in Chesterfield, Mass. Alexander Edwards of Wales, one of the early settlers of Springfield, was his ancestor. Mr. Edwards was several years with Dr. Hunt of Northampton. He came to Springfield about 1815. In the early days was in business with Mr. Henry Sterns, afterwards by himself. He married in 1821 Eunice, daughter of Daniel Lombard. It was Mr. Peabody's first wedding ceremony. Mr. Lombard was a descendant of John Lombard, also one of the early settlers of Springfield. His wife, Sylvia Burt, de-



ROSE COTTAGE, OR HOUSE NUMBER FIVE.

scended from Henry Burt, another settler. Eulalia was the name of Henry Burt's wife. Mr. Lombard was postmaster twenty-three years; was one of the first removals on account of the "spoils" system inaugurated by Andrew Jackson in 1828. Mr. Edwards was one of the original directors of the Chicopee Bank. He had a rare personality; every one was his friend. He paid the same respect to the poor man he passed on the street as to the more favored. His laugh was inspiring. No one could resist "catching the contagion of its warmth and cheerfulness." Mrs. Edwards had great beauty which she never lost during her seventy-eight years of life, but the only compliment she valued was one for her business ability. Mr. Edwards died when only forty-five years old; the care of many children (ten were born in Number Five, three died in infancy), a large place, everything devolving upon her developed solid abilities. Mr. Edwards' funeral was on

Sunday in Feb. 1840 ; he, as a young man, with others was read out of the First Church at the time of the Unitarian secession. Dr. Osgood, however, always remained a fast friend ; tradition says had good reason. It also says Dr. Osgood went into his pulpit that Sunday afternoon and told his people "he thought they would like to go where he was going to the Unitarian Church to Mr. Edwards' funeral," he would make a prayer and then dismiss the congregation.

This story seemed to have a flavor of sweetness for both men. "Rose Cottage," as House Number Five was called, (the roses climbed on all sides of the piazzas,) has its own story to tell of its past in the joyous, innocent life of those days. Its garden had no rival ; fruit, flowers and vegetables in profusion. In the early days of peach culture there was such a yield, the peaches were gathered in quantities under a large willow tree in sight of the so-called

“back gate” for free distribution. That same willow tree! Boys and girls, do you remember the swing that seemed to carry us skyward, almost to Heaven; the elastic branch that bent but never broke, swaying in perfect harmony with the motion of the swing; and the fruit orchard, yielding its fruit all the summer months, cherries, plums, early pears, apples, such immense red sweet apples as only that one tree was ever known to bear, its branches growing on purpose to make comfortable seats, where the children could pass hours in play or study. The Fourth of July picnics in that same orchard sometimes in the grove opposite, do you remember? Also in the winter months, when the fruit that often seemed to boys the “sweetest” was no longer there to tempt, its covering of shining ice attracted both boys and girls. Only this winter a sixty-year “young” man recalled the jolly old times in that same ice-clad orchard.

A year ago there were seven children living; Caroline, the eldest, married William L. Smith, a lawyer and twice mayor of Springfield. Her memory is green to day; the annals of "Auld lang syne" would grow dim without her. The second daughter, Sophia, married Mr. James H. Johnson of Bath, New Hampshire; he had been member of Congress the two previous years and again the two following years. She is enrolled among the literary women of New Hampshire. There were five daughters and two sons; all were married; four daughters in the parlor of Number Five, where in the winter months the windows opened into a conservatory. The youngest was married in the old Unitarian Church. The oldest son, William, is a successful business man of Cleveland, Ohio, of whom it is said "No man can count more friends than he." The younger, Oliver, entered the army at the outbreak of the Civil War as adjutant; retired at its close brevet major-general.



HOUSE NUMBER SIX.

which title he had won. Eighteen years ago Number Five was removed and a street laid out through to Elliott street called Edwards street.

House Number Six was built by James Sanford Dwight, son of James Scutt Dwight. He was two years at Harvard College; left on account of ill health; afterwards was in business with his father. He went abroad in 1830 and died in Florence at the age of thirty-one. He married Elizabeth Lee, of Lancaster, Mass., daughter of Benjamin Lee of Taunton, England. Three daughters were born in Number Six. The eldest, Elizabeth, married the famous specialist, the late Dr. Fordyce Barker of New York. Mary, the second daughter, married Mr. David A. Wales, also a native of Springfield, a noted political economist. He married the third daughter, Ellen, for his second wife. Mrs. Dwight married Mr. Adams and afterwards lived in Norwich. Number Six has

had a more varied experience than any other of the eight houses. Mr. Chester Harding bought it of the Dwight estate; while living there, built House Number Seven. Capt. John Child was the next owner; he was born in West Boylston, Mass.; graduated from West Point; later resigned his commission to devote himself to the construction of railroads. He married Laura Dwight, daughter of James Scutt Dwight. She had the reputation of never talking gossip. Three children were born: Frank who died when about five years old, Lelia, as lovely as a Mayflower, who was lost at sea with her mother in the steamer *Arctic*, while returning from Europe, and Mary, the wife of Mr. Charles P. Deane of Springfield. Capt. Child married for his second wife, Ellen, daughter of Mr. Mark Healey of Boston. Capt. Child rented Number Six for several years, while constructing railroads in different parts of the country. Major Whistler was

one of the occupants. He was a graduate of West Point. He came to Springfield in the interest of the Boston & Albany Railroad, then called the Western Railroad. His family consisted of his wife and five children. The only daughter, Deborah, was a beautiful girl; she played the harp and it was lovely to see and hear her. Some one has suggested, "Were the young girls of those days so beautiful, is it not the old woman's vision that through her magnified glasses sees the faces that memory paints?" Disinterested authorities have been consulted; the verdict "You may take for truth every written superlative." Much more might be added that is suppressed for fear of suspected exaggeration.

Springfield in those days was noted for its beautiful girls. They did not all live on Chestnut street. The evening before the wedding of Miss Anna Dwight in House Number Three, her aunt, Mrs. George Bliss, gave a party in honor of the

guests from abroad. Mrs. Harrison Gray Otis was one of them. She was the society leader of Boston at that time. In the course of the evening she gathered a number of the fair maidens in a circle, herself in the center, and as they danced round her, she saluted each in passing. Years after during the Civil war, her house was freely given to the work of the sanitary commission. One day, attracted by a young girl of fifteen, one of the workers, she asked her name ; when told she was from Springfield (House Number Six), she said "Springfield! The garden of the Gods. I remember seeing there some years ago, the most beautiful bevy of girls I ever gazed upon."

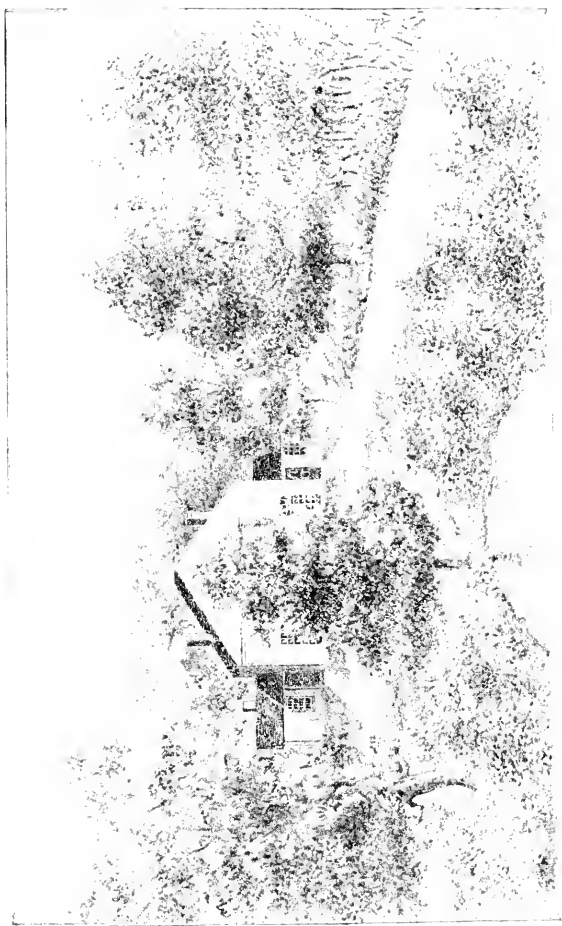
Seymour Hayden

Major Whistler was called to Russia to construct the first railroad there. He died before its completion. Deborah married Dr. Sydney Hayden, an Englishman, the famous etcher. The three youngest sons, James, Will and Kirk were small boys. James is the famous London artist. Kirk

died while they were living in Number Six. The three had such beautiful hair, each head a mass of curls, exciting the envy of a little girl next door whose hair could not be tortured into a curl. Major Ripley, afterwards General, was the next occupant. Mrs. Ripley and five daughters comprised his family. The eldest was very beautiful. An unusual combination, dark almost black wavy hair, perfect features, deep blue eyes, dark eyebrows, complexion like ivory and a graceful figure. She married Mr. Robert C. Hooper of Boston, the wedding was in Number Six. A son, the late Dr. Frank Hooper was a noted specialist of Boston. Two of the children died in Number Six. Memory would like to paint you their pictures. Major Ripley directed the building of the Commandant's quarters at the Armory and when finished moved there.

In later days, Rev. Francis Tiffany rented House Number Six, when he came

to Springfield from Cambridge Divinity School as pastor of the Unitarian Church, with his lovely bride Esther Brown. He and his wife were Baltimoreans. Mr. Tiffany built the house afterwards bought by the late Mr. Samuel Bowles, now the MacDuffie School on Central Street. Cambridge has been his home for some years. He is a well-known writer, has a genius for word painting. A book on Japan and India called "This Goodly Frame the Earth" is full of it. Capt. Child, after his second marriage, again resided in House Number Six and died there a year or two later. A son John was born a few days before his death. In time the place was sold to the late Mr. Ethan Chapin. Mrs. Chapin is still in possession. Mr. Chapin was one of the world wide known Massasoit proprietors. His eldest daughter married Hon. W. H. Haile the owner and occupant of House Number Three.



HOUSE NUMBER SEVEN

When Mr. Chester Harding, the famous artist, first came to Springfield, he occupied the Trask house on State Street now called the Alexander house, or "Linden Hall," then he moved to Chestnut Street, buying House Number Six. Later he built House Number Seven. It stood where Mattoon Street is now. It was an attractive residence ; 200 feet or more from the street ; a driveway made a half circle from one end to the other, extending from Number Six to the present Birnie lot. In front was a deep hollow enclosing a small pond where Neptune with his trident reigned supreme, to the delight of all passers-by. It was a fine coasting place for the young people in winter. This quotation from a letter must have a place here. "I wonder if you remember that when father made our place, it was a swampy piece of ground which he had offered to give Mr. Peabody if he would build upon it. He refused it, as being

quite impracticable. The whole thing was done by father. He had quite large trees moved to make the pond, when they were in full leaf in August, and they never drooped a particle." Those trees added so much to the beauty of the place. One cannot overpraise Mr. Harding's family. He, himself, was a grand specimen of a man ; six feet three inches in his stockings ; a form duly proportioned and a magnificent head. His "Egotistigraphy" is a wonderful record. His paternal grandparents were Massachusetts farmers. The noblest men in the country came from such ancestors. His father had an inventive mania which brought poverty instead of gold. His family emigrated to the wilderness of New York State while he was yet a boy. At nineteen he could with some effort, read the only book they possessed, the Bible. He married while young ; his wife had taught school. After a varied experience of mostly hardships, at

the age of thirty-one, he is in London painting his Royal Highness the Duke of Sussex. A guest of Mr. Coke (he it was who first proposed to acknowledge American Independence) painting his picture. At table there were ten attendants, the chief of ceremonies, butler and eight in powdered livery, every dish of silver; at dessert, knives and forks of gold. Also in Scotland guest of the Duke of Hamilton, painting his picture for the Duke of Sussex. And he himself an American nobleman truly. It was after this experience that he came to Springfield. Mrs. Harding was a perfectly self-poised woman, nothing ruffled her; could you read the account of her early married life you would not wonder. She had beautiful brown eyes and was most lovable. There were three daughters and six sons. The two eldest daughters were very beautiful, their faces in Memory's gallery are unrivaled. The second daughter Caroline married the late John L. King of

this city; Margaretta the third daughter married Mr. William Orne White of Salem, Mass. He was many years Unitarian minister at Keene, N. H. Eliza Orne White the authoress is their daughter. The family are now living in Brookline, Mass. The sons are scattered over the land. Mr. and Mrs. King lived in the Homestead a few years after their marriage, Mrs. Harding died in 1845; Mr. Harding in 1866. Later Mr. King bought the house on the corner of Maple and Central Streets. It is still in the possession of his children. Mr. William Mattoon, a descendant of General Mattoon, bought the Harding place; in time filled in the hollow and opened the street called Mattoon Street.

House Number Eight was built by Mr. William Dwight, a graduate of Harvard College. He was a son of Jonathan Dwight 2d., as ardent a Whig as his brother-in-law Mr Bancroft was a democrat.



HOUSE NUMBER EIGHT.

He married in 1830, Eliza Amelia White daughter of Hon. Daniel Appleton White of Salem, Mass. She was another rarely beautiful woman. She is remembered by the younger generation to-day, as she stood in the old Unitarian Church, singing in the midst of her six boys, with a motherly eye to their behavior, and her lovely face all aglow with the spirit of the song. There was no Pearl street, no Birnie house then. The Dwight place and the Harding touched each other. Seven sons were born, six grew up in Number Eight. The babe that died was the first burial in the Springfield Cemetery. A lively set they were. The mother's nerves were sorely taxed. What could be done to lessen the strain? Mr. Horace Mann was in town to lecture; she consulted him. He said, "shut your boys in an attic, feed them on bread and water, allow no exercise and you will have as meek, tractable boys as you desire; but if you prefer

strong, healthy boys, with all their vital powers active, give them liberty with wise limitations." The eldest son, William, was a graduate of West Point. He was promoted to the rank of general in the Civil war. The second son, Wilder, was a graduate of Harvard College, a rare, splendid fellow; he was killed early in the war, a tablet, telling his story, is in Memorial Hall at Cambridge. Howard, another brother, was also killed. In later years some men in the interest of speculation, bought Number Eight, moved it to one side and opened Pearl street through to Spring street. The late Mr. D. L. Harris bought the house in its new location and his family still have possession. Mr. Harris was a successful railroad business man, was president of the Connecticut River Railroad for many years. The family speak for themselves, "their own works praise them."

There are a legion of details connected

with the story of each of the Eight Houses. Social life was at its best. Chestnut street, near the business center, yet so protected by its hills, it seemed like an enclosed park. In summer every one lived out of doors, and there were never more beautiful girls than those who went in and out of those Eight Houses. Hospitality was a common virtue. Skilled cooks the rule. There was great indignation when one was beguiled to Boston, where she lived in Gov. Winthrop's family, till homesickness returned her. No stoves nor ranges in the early days of memory; over an open wood fire must the kettles boil and the haunches of venison and legs of mutton, kept to the limit of time, be roasted not baked, before the glowing coals. The large brick oven yielding its wealth of rich pastry and fruit cake minus baking powder. Were not eggs plenty in the land? There were plainer sorts for the children. Tradition as well as memory

tells of the dinners that were given, and of the guests, witty and brilliant, men of whom in later years Thackeray said when in Springfield to lecture after a dinner at Hon. George Ashmun's, they were equal to any he had ever met in England or America. Hon. George T. Davis of Greenfield, whom the Court often called to Springfield was an especial favorite. He had the reputation of being "the most brilliant table talker in America."

After the story of the Eight Houses is told, there is A House by Itself that has also its place in the memories of Chestnut street. It was built by the late Mr. Justice Willard in 1840 on the south side, where Harrison avenue now is. The land on that side being restricted, the house was placed partly down the hill to the required limit, with an entrance on Chestnut street. Mr. Willard was a native of Greenfield, Mass., and a graduate of Dartmouth College. He opened a law



A HOUSE BY ITSELF.

office in Springfield in 1816. He married Sarah Lyman Bryant of Springfield. There were eight children when the family came to live on Chestnut street, six daughters and two sons. The eldest daughter, Margaret, an interesting girl, died in her young maidenhood. Mrs. Willard died in 1853; Mr. Willard in 1864. Mr. Willard held several important offices. Hon. William J. Bates of Westfield relates this anecdote of him. There was a public meeting held in Springfield, year not mentioned, to discuss the question of constructing a railroad from Boston to Albany. After others had spoken, Mr. Willard arose and said, " Mr. President, I am told that I am apt to be too sanguine, but, sir, when I consider the improvements of the age, the new discoveries that must hereafter be made in that wonderful machine, the steam engine, I believe and am ready to declare, and I do declare that during the life time of some persons stand-

ing here, a train of cars will run from Springfield to Boston between sun and sun ;” and, pausing a moment for the applause to subside, he drew himself up, and shaking his finger with oracular solemnity, continued, “ Yes, sir ; I repeat between sun and sun and back again the same day.” The prophecy was received with a deafening shout, and Mr. Willard sat down amid the jeers of his audience. About 1857 Sarah opened a school in a little building on the place, assisted by a twin sister, Susan, and Harriet, a younger sister. The younger son, Wells, distinguished himself in the Civil war ; was taken prisoner and can tell of Libby and Danville. At the close of the war he entered the regular army and now holds the rank of major. Mr. Willard, during his life, opened the lower part of his place to Harrison avenue already opened to Main street, but not till some years after his death did the family remove the house and open Harrison avenue to Chestnut street.

Most of the early families were Unitarians of the original New England kind, which would almost be called Conservative Orthodox to-day. Overlooking old papers a year ago, four funeral sermons by Mr. Peabody were read. The grandchildren of that generation exclaimed, "did people sit and listen to such sermons, why the gloom of them is dreadful." The sermons were considered very beautiful in the far off days. The sunlight of God's love was just beginning to gild the shadow of death. Unitarianism was "heresy." To be called "a heretic," roused the youthful spirit and made one watchful. Mr. Peabody died in May, 1847. There was a gathering of friends in the old Unitarian Church to arrange for his funeral; tender, loving words were spoken. One of the speakers was Dr. Osgood of the First Church. Memory recalls these words, and the hearers' amazement, "By following such an example as *his* we shall be following the

example of one who is still higher." Could a finer tribute to any man be paid, whatever his creed? After that day "heretic" lost all its sting. To quote Dr. Osgood gave peace to the soul.

When one looks over the record of those who originally lived in these "Houses" and of the children who went out from them into the world, one's heart fills with pride; they have in most every instance stood for what is the highest and best in the land. There are many more traditions pleading for a place on these pages; they must remain unwritten. If anyone is dissatisfied with the record, they are in sympathy with the writer. There are five of the Nine Houses remaining on Chestnut street; not one occupied by descendants of the original owners. They are in the possession of worthy inheritors of ancient Chestnut street, but its pristine glory has departed, its privacy vanished, its trees have been ruthlessly laid low. Although

there is a glimmering of the old days left,
it is only to the eyes of those who know
the old, old story.

CHARLOTTE EDWARDS WARNER.

February, 1897.

The writer, Charlotte Edwards Warner, and her sister, Sophia Orne Johnson, present this little sketch to the descendants of Ancient Chestnut Street.

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Blest he to whom the annals of his fathers
their gladness and their noble course of life
do joyful reminiscence sweetest love,
himself in humbleness and pride a son
of that revered race

Goethe, Iphigenia

57 Mulberry St.

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